



MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS

A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER FROM ATLANTIC BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

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Understanding the Power of Relationships on Mental Health

Relationships are foundational to our mental health and well-being. Relationships can come in different configurations — family, friends, marriages, co-workers, even the barista at your coffee shop. Studies show that people with strong connections to others are healthier and happier.

“Social connections like these not only give us pleasure, but they also influence our long-term health in ways every bit as powerful as adequate sleep, a good diet, and not smoking. Dozens of studies have shown that people who have social support from family, friends, and their community are happier, have fewer health problems, and live longer.” [The Health Benefits of Strong Relationships - Harvard Health](#)

It is also important to know that the lack of connection to others can have an adverse impact on our mental and physical health. “One study, which examined data from more than 309,000 people, found that lack of strong relationships increased the risk of premature death from all causes by 50% — an effect on mortality risk roughly comparable to smoking up to 15 cigarettes a day, and greater than obesity and physical inactivity.”

What makes a relationship "good"?

How can we cultivate and strengthen the qualities that lead to strong, satisfying relationships?



Building Healthy Relationships

Tips for Building Healthy Relationships

1. **Speak your mind with patience and kindness.** Healthy relationships have enough trust, respect and honesty to handle your ideas, needs and point of view. This also needs to be done with a willingness to hear the other person as well. That is why cultivating patience and kindness are so important in healthy relationships. Learn and practice healthy communication skills in all your relationships. Try using an "I Statement" instead of a "You Statement." For example: Try saying "*I was sad that you didn't come home when you said you would*" instead of "*You are always late, and I can never count on you!*"
2. **Follow through matters.** Being dependable, reliable and fair are building blocks of healthy relationships. Nobody is perfect, so this is an ongoing process for healthy relationships. *If you find that keeping commitments is hard, try working on:*
 - *time management*
 - *priority setting*
 - *clarifying your values*
3. **Have fun together.** Spending time doing things that are enjoyable is key to healthy relationships and builds strong bonds and connection. This can be simple things like getting out into nature, sharing a movie, cooking, or building a swing set for the kids. Whatever you find fun, make sure you build that into your relationship.
 - *Try setting a date for fun on a regular basis.*
 - *Reach out to friends to catch up and share stories about life.*
 - *Write a letter or start a relationship journal.*



Fight Fair

Every relationship will have its challenges and disagreements. Learning how to disagree in healthy ways is part of building healthy relationships. Here are some tips to keep in mind:

1. **Accept that you are not always going to agree.** Having realistic expectations of your relationships is important. No one likes disagreements but there are healthy ways to work through those times.
 - Don't expect the other person to read your mind.
 - Learn to tell the other person what you want and don't want and ask them to tell you the same about them.
 - Let go of disagreements that have been resolved. Holding a grudge hurts relationships.
2. **Stick with the current issues.** It can be easy to start piling on the problems and complaints when disagreements arise.
 - Do some calming exercises when you are getting upset.
 - Have an agreement to take some time apart if things get too heated. Then, come back when you are calmer.
 - Learn to discuss a past disagreement without getting back into the fight.
3. **Remember that this is someone you care about.** When we disagree, we can forget that the goal is not to "win". This can help us avoid saying things in the heat of an argument that we will regret later. Avoid name calling or blaming.
 - Try telling yourself that this is someone you care about and that it is not about winning.
 - Remember to tell the other person you care about them even though you are in disagreement.



Relationship Red Flags

1. **The other person doesn't show up.** In healthy relationships, people are reliable and want to spend time together. Someone who stops showing up, emotionally or physically, is telling you they are not reliable. If possible, try to discuss this with them. Otherwise, it could be a relationship red flag.
2. **Dishonestly.** Healthy relationships require trust and honesty. When someone tells lies, cheats or breaks the agreement of the relationship consistently, that is a relationship red flag and needs to be addressed.
3. **Any kind of threatening behavior is a relationship red flag.** This can be emotional, verbal or physical. These kinds of behaviors are toxic to any relationship and should be avoided.

If you feel you are in an abusive relationship, contact your local domestic abuse support services.

NJ Hotline **800-799-7233** or text **88788**



Valentine's Day

Love it or hate it, make Valentine's Day a day to show your love to those around you and also to yourself! Here's how to show yourself some love this Valentine's Day — and every day.

Why Is Self-Love Important?

It's important to love yourself — because that's who you're spending the rest of your life with!

Self-love can be defined as an appreciation of one's own worth or virtue. That includes accepting yourself as you are, prioritizing your needs, setting healthy boundaries and forgiving yourself when needed. Treating yourself with kindness and respect means taking time to take care of your overall well-being.

Honoring yourself is the first step in a lifelong journey to nurturing your personal growth and learning to manage adversity. Self-love can be a challenge, but, by prioritizing the practice, you'll start seeing results.

Ways to Cultivate Self-Love

- Keep a Gratitude Journal.
- Give yourself a compliment.
- Speak to yourself as you would with a friend.
- Practice mindfulness.
- Celebrate the small wins.
- Limit time on social media.
- Find support if you need it.

[6 Ways to Practice Self-Love – Forbes Health](#)

Fun Valentine Fact

"In the Middle Ages, when dating apps like Tinder didn't exist, youngsters looking for love drew names from a bowl to see who their Valentine would be. What we found amusing was that 'wearing your heart on your sleeve' was indeed taken literally. These young men and women would pin the name they found on their sleeves for a week. This was done so that everyone, including the special someone, could see how they feel wearing the name tag, which would show their true feelings." [7 Facts About Valentine's Day That You May Not Know About \(msn.com\)](#)

CRISIS RESOURCES

If you feel you or someone you know may harm themselves or someone else:

- **988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline:** 988
- **The Trevor Lifeline for LGBTQIA+ Youth:** 1-866-488-7386
- **Disaster Distress Helpline:** Call 1-800-985-5990 or text TalkWithUs to 66746 to connect with a trained crisis counselor.
- **Veterans Crisis Line:** Dial 988 and Press 1
- **Dial 211:** 211 provides callers with information about and referrals to social services for every day needs and in times of crisis
- **SAMHSA Treatment Locator:** findtreatment.samhsa.gov

Atlantic Behavioral Health ACCESS Center:

888-247-1400

Atlantic Behavioral Health Crisis Intervention Services

24/7 Hotlines:

Chilton Medical Center: 973-831-5078
Hackettstown Medical Center: 908-454-5141
Morristown Medical Center: 973-540-0100
Overlook Medical Center: 908-522-3586
Newton Medical Center: 973-383-0973

Website:
Atlantichealth.org

 **Atlantic Health System**
Behavioral Health

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